



# *State Representative* **Connie Ladenburg** **Legislative Report** **2011**

**Summer 2011**

## **State Representative** **Connie Ladenburg**

**(D) 29th Legislative District**

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Dear neighbors,

What's the best way to improve our schools and create jobs? How can we keep our neighborhoods safe — and what's the best way to balance the state budget?

Those are the issues I've been working on during my first year in the House of Representatives, because those are the issues I keep hearing about from neighbors, friends and citizens.

Listening to you — and keeping you informed — is a huge part of my job.

This newsletter is meant to give you a bit of what you need as a citizen in our democracy, to inform you about what happened in Olympia this session and to give you a chance to tell me your comments, questions and ideas.

I hope this newsletter finds you and your family well. It's a great honor and privilege to serve as your representative. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

**Connie Ladenburg**  
State Representative

# State Representative **Connie Ladenburg**

## Strong schools

A world-class education for today's children is the best strategy for creating tomorrow's jobs.

Our parents and grandparents sacrificed to give us a better life. As a mother and grandmother, I know how hard people work to give their children the best they can.

Education is the pillar of our economy and our democracy, because we need well-educated workers and voters to keep America the greatest country in the world.

While the global recession meant tough cuts and reforms, we did our best to protect basic education while passing reforms to do things better for our kids.

## High school dropouts

Far too many students are dropping out before they get their high school degree.



Not only is that a recipe for a lifetime of hardship and struggle, it's a completely preventable tragedy and waste of potential. It's a myth that the kids who drop out aren't smart enough. They are. And we can do better.

Pay for Actual Student Success (PASS, House Bill 1599) provides incentives to high schools that improve their graduation rates. We've found methods that scientifically work to do this, and this law will help those kids get their degree and reach their potential.

## Innovative schools

House Bill 1546 gives school districts more flexibility to create innovative schools, as we have in

Tacoma with our magnet schools. The new law lets school districts do Innovation Schools or Innovative Zones that provide new and creative models for educating our children, such as Schools of the Arts, Science and Math Institute and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) schools.

## Opening the door to college



House Bill 1808 creates a Launch Year, allowing students to earn a year's worth of college credits while still in high school. The bill gets schools working together with community colleges, technical colleges and universities to give students a smoother transition from high school to higher education and a career.

## \$100 million for schools

Along with the other freshman Democratic lawmakers, I worked hard to find a creative way to fund our schools, especially the first years of a child's education. Researchers tell us that kindergarten through third grade are crucial.

How could we find the funding to protect K-3 students from the terrible budget cuts?

We found out that our state gives a \$100 million tax break to Wall Street banks — a tax giveaway that's so obsolete and outdated, even the bank lobbyists testified in committee

that it doesn't benefit Washington state taxpayers. At all.

So we wrote legislation to actually put that \$100 million toward something that would benefit Washington state taxpayers by ending the useless tax break and putting that money toward kindergarten through third-grade classrooms.

The bill got 52 votes in the House, more than enough to pass. Yet an initiative says a majority isn't enough, so the bill didn't pass.

This issue is now in the courts, which I believe is the right place. Can you amend the state constitution with an initiative, or can it only be changed by a two-thirds vote of the House and Senate and a vote of the people?

## Public safety

We all want safe streets and neighborhoods, the kind of places our kids and grandparents can walk without fear.

As vice chair of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, I worked hard to pass reforms that will make our communities safer.

***Here are some of the reforms we passed this year:***

## Drunk driving



***Taking away the car*** – Some drunk drivers have actually been arrested, processed and released on

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bail, only to go right back to their car, get behind the wheel and hurt somebody else. With the passage of Senate Bill 5000, there will now be a 12-hour mandatory impound for a drunk driver's car so they can't get out of jail and get right back behind the wheel.

## ***Toughening the penalties –***

There isn't a huge problem anymore with average people getting drunk and behind the wheel. If people like that slip up and get caught, they tend to never do it again. The problem today is with chronic drunk drivers, the ones who won't change their dangerous ways no matter how many times we put handcuffs on them, fine them, take their driver's license away or lock them up in jail.

That's why ignition interlock devices are so important. Experience has shown us that these devices actually work with chronic drunk drivers. House Bill 1789 will push more chronic drunk drivers to pay to install an ignition interlock device in their car rather than do the three days in jail.

This law also raises more money for prevention programs. It's much cheaper to stop drunk drivers from getting in the car than to clean up the mess of mangled metal, injured victims, court costs and prison time.

## **Safety for prison guards**



The murder of corrections officer Jayme Biendl by an inmate at the Monroe prison was a wakeup call for

all of us. We can't prevent every tragedy — but we can make conditions safer for officers. Senate Bill 5907 gives officers personal body alarms, proximity cards to ensure the right people are in the right parts of the prison and gets officers, experts and prison officials together to find reforms to make our prisons safer.

## **Bullying in schools**

Social media like Facebook and Twitter have created new ways for bullies to torment other kids, even when they're not in school. As a mother and grandmother, I know that most kids get teased and bullied at some point. And it doesn't have to be that way. House Bill 1163 will give us quicker intervention and stronger rules to stop harassment and bullying from spiraling out of control.

## **Protecting rape victims**



A young rape victim in King County last year went to the roof of the county courthouse to jump, rather than be tortured in court by an accused rapist who abused the system so he could spend weeks making his victims relive and recount his attacks to the jury. Prosecutors, judges and jurors from that trial testified in favor of this reform. House Bill 1001 protects rape victims from being subjected to unreasonable cross-examination in court by their accused attackers.

## **Balancing the budget**

The global recession hit our state hard, just as it's hit every other state in the union.

We've cut almost \$10 billion from the state budget in the last few years. In fact, State spending is at its lowest since 1986. I know there's a common misconception that the state is a bureaucracy with plenty of fat to cut, but I've looked over the budget, and if there was a bunch of easy fat to cut, it would have been great to know.

The cuts came from schools and universities, prisons and parks.

These cuts hurt real people. Teachers and others are getting lay-off notices. It's not a happy thing for anybody.

But we did balance the budget without raising taxes, and we did it carefully, to minimize the damage. The tough cuts have forced us to make government more efficient, and we have continued to find creative ways of doing more with less.



I believe the workers and business of Washington state are the best in the world, and I know our best days are still ahead of us. We will bounce back.



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Please  
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## What do you think?

### Your opinion matters to me.

Please take a second to share your thoughts, comments or ideas.

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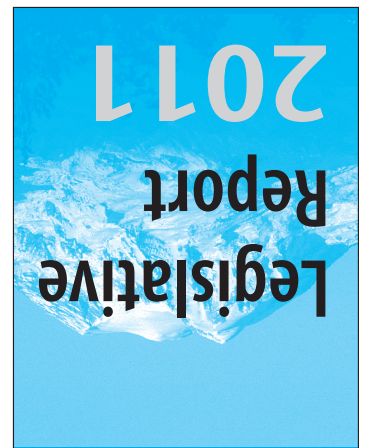
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